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CONFIDENTIAL BEIJING 042500

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PREL, APEC, CH, US
SUBJECT: CHINESE PRELIMINARY RESPONSE TO CLINTON-JIANG
MEETING: AN UNCERTAIN BEGINNING

REF: A) BEIJING 41535 NOTAL, B) FBIS HK 2311102993

1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY: THE PRELIMINARY CHINESE REACTION TO PRESIDENT CLINTON AND JIANG'S MEETING IN SEATTLE HAS BEEN TENTATIVE AND LOW KEY. WHILE MEDIA REPORTS HAVE FOCUSED ON REMARKS BY PRESIDENT JIANG AND FOREIGN MINISTER QIAN DESCRIBING THE MEETING AS "A GOOD BEGINNING," THIS CAUTIOUS PUBLIC TREATMENT AND GENERALLY CIRCUMSPECT COMMENTS FROM EMBASSY CONTACTS INDICATE THAT A FINAL CHINESE SPIN MAY NOT EMERGE UNTIL SOMETIME AFTER JIANG AND QIAN'S RETURN FROM THEIR CURRENT TRIP NEXT WEEK. HONG KONG PRC-CONTROLLED MEDIA HAVE BEEN SOMEWHAT MORE UPBEAT, AS WAS ONE CHINESE DIPLOMAT HERE. END SUMMARY.

3. IN CONTRAST TO THE EXTENSIVE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE BUILD-UP OF THE NOVEMBER 20 MEETING BETWEEN PRESIDENTS CLINTON AND JIANG ZEMIN AS A TURNING POINT IN U.S.-CHINA RELATIONS, THE PRELIMINARY CHINESE REACTION TO THE TWO LEADER'S MEETING HAS BEEN TENTATIVE AND LOW KEY. ALTHOUGH THE JIANG-CLINTON BILATERAL RECEIVED FRONT PAGE COVERAGE ON NOVEMBER 21, IT COMPETED WITH OR WAS SUPERSEDED BY THE ECONOMIC RESULTS OF THE APEC MEETING, JIANG'S OTHER BILATERALS WITH APEC LEADERS AND DETAILS OF HIS SUBSEQUENT CONFIDENTIAL 2

BILATERALS WITH APEC LEADERS AND DETAILS OF HIS SUBSEQUENT VISITS TO CUBA AND BRAZIL. NOR WAS THERE PRESS REPORTING OF MINISTER OF FOREIGN TRADE AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION (MOFEC) WU YI'S MEETING WITH U.S. TRADE REPRESENTATIVE XANTOR OF SECRETARY OF COMMERCE BROWN.

4. MEDIA REPORTS FOCUSED ON REMARKS BY PRESIDENT JIANG AND VICE PREMIER AND FOREIGN MINISTER QIAN QICHEN

DESCRIBING THE MEETING AS A "GOOD BEGINNING" IN U.S.-CHINA RELATIONS BUT AVOIDING SUPERLATIVES AND SPECIFIC DETAILS. JIANG WAS QUOTED REPEATING THE CHINESE POSITION THAT

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DIFFERENCES SHOULD BE RESOLVED THROUGH DIALOGUE BASED ON EQUALITY AND MUTUAL RESPECT WITHOUT RECOURSE TO PRESSURE BY EITHER SIDE. NOTICEABLY LACKING IN THE POST-MEETING COVERAGE WERE FOLLOW-ON COMMENTARIES IN THE OFFICIAL MAINLAND PRESS. HOWEVER, AN EDITORIAL ON THE CLINTON-JIANG MEETING IN THE PRC-CONTROLLED HONG KONG WEN WEI PO (REF B) WAS POSITIVE IN TONE.

5. A MIDDLE-RANKING FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL SECONDED TO THE CHINESE PEOPLE'S INSTITUTE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS TOLD US THE CLINTON-JIANG MEETING WAS A PLUS FOR CHINA ON TAIWAN-RELATED GROUNDS, SINCE PRESIDENT CLINTON REAFFIRMED THE U.S. ONE CHINA POLICY AND COMMITMENT TO THE THREE U.S.-CHINA COMMUNIQUE. HOWEVER, IN OTHER CONVERSATIONS WITH POLOFFS THIS WEEK, MFA OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN GENERALLY CIRCUMSPECT. LIKEWISE, A CURSORY SAMPLING OF CHINESE GOVERNMENT THINK TANK RESEARCHERS ELICITED NO TRENCANT COMMENT.

6. THIS CAUTIOUS TREATMENT MAY INDICATE NOTHING MORE THAN THAT JIANG AND QIAN ARE STILL ON THE ROAD. BEIJING HAD BILLED THE CLINTON-JIANG MEETING AS A KEY TURNING POINT IN U.S.-CHINA RELATIONS. PRIOR TO NOVEMBER 19, THE CHINESE APPROACH EMPHASIZED THE NEED FOR THE U.S. AND CHINA TO FOCUS ON COMMON INTERESTS RATHER THAN DIFFERENCES IN THEIR VALUE SYSTEMS AS THE BASIS FOR A NEW MORE POSITIVE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. IN AN UNPRECEDENTED COURTING OF THE AMERICAN PRESS, JIANG AND QIAN ATTEMPTED TO DEFINE

THESE INTERESTS PRIMARILY IN ECONOMIC TERMS. IN HIS SPEECH AT THE BOEING CO. AND VISIT TO AN AMERICAN FAMILY, JIANG HIGHLIGHTED CHINA'S GROWING ECONOMIC STRENGTH AND THE BENEFITS TO AMERICAN FIRMS AND WORKERS FROM AN IMPROVED U.S.-CHINA RELATIONSHIP.

7. COMMENT: CHINA'S PRESENCE AT APEC BROUGHT IT ONTO THE WORLD STAGE IN A POSITIVE WAY THAT CONTINUED BEIJING'S CONFIDENTIAL 3

QUEST FOR RECOGNITION AS A MAJOR REGIONAL/INTERNATIONAL PLAYER. SIMPLY BY AVOIDING ANY MAJOR PUBLIC GAFFES OR SERIOUS FRICTION WITH TAIWAN IN SEATTLE, JIANG HAS BOLSTERED HIS PERSONAL STATURE WITHIN THE CHINESE LEADERSHIP AND DISPELLED CONCERNS THAT HE MIGHT NOT BE UP TO SUCH HIGH-STAKES EXPOSURE. FOR NOW, HOWEVER, WE MAY HAVE TO WAIT JIANG AND QIAN'S RETURN BEFORE SEEING A MORE DEFINITIVE LINE EMERGE ON THE PRESIDENTS' MEETING. HALLFORD

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IS/FPC/CDR(1)

Date: 1 May 96

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